



Liberty City Gets a New Primary Care Health Center

BY VOLKER TER HASEBORG

Just as officials readied to mark the opening of a long-awaited healthcare center in Liberty City on Wednesday morning, the clouds burst open with a heavy downpour that drenched an outdoor stage and a chorus belting out the classic song, What a Wonderful World.

But that didn't dampen the festive mood even as the ceremony had to move inside the new Frederica Wilson and Juanita Mann Health Center at 2520 NW 75th St.

"The services that are provided here are to ensure that the people have a medical home," said Lillian Rivera, Administrator of the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County. "We want to build a healthy hub."

After years of uncertainty and funding issues, Liberty City finally has its health center.

The 10,000-square-foot facility is within walking distance for 75,000 people, Rivera said, and will provide services such as primary care, health screenings, wellness education and a nutrition program for women, infants and children. The center was built with state funds and will be operated by the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County.

Efforts to build a clinic in Liberty City had been previously derailed. Two other clinics in the area had been torn down because they were outdated and ran out of funding. In 2007, plans for a state-of-the-art health clinic on Martin Luther King Boulevard never materialized.

Rivera told those in attendance that it was not easy to raise the \$2.5 million to begin construction of the new clinic and credited Wilson with securing the state funds.

Wilson, who wore a green dress and one of her signature hats, told the gathering of about 100 people: "This health center is so important and so needed in the heart of Liberty City, so that people can walk to the clinic."

She also told the audience that her next goal was to expand pediatric services. "We want a center for kids, including dental care." The expansion would raise the cost of the clinic to an estimated \$12 million.

When Wilson heard that the center would be named after her, she insisted that a second name be added: Juanita Mann.

The late "Nurse Mann," as she was known, was a registered nurse who worked at schools in Liberty City and Brownsville. Wilson told the audience that "Nurse Mann," who was her nurse as well while she attended school, sent her to the doctor one day because she had the impression that the young Wilson didn't look healthy. A doctor later diagnosed her with tuberculosis.

"She saved my life. Without her, I would not be in Congress," Wilson said. "I remember her every day."

FREDERICA WILSON AND JUANITA MANN HEALTH CENTER

Location: 2520 NW 75th St., Miami.

Hours of operation: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Patients can schedule free health screenings and other appointments by phone at 305-637-6400. Walk-ins also are accepted.

Appointments for the nutrition program for women, infants and children can be made by phone at 786-336-1333.